



Enter The Inner Circle

By Pastor P. W. Philpott
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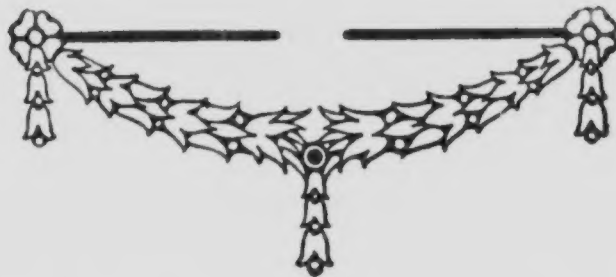


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"And the Lord said, Behold, there is *a place by Me.*" Exod. 33:21.

What God's people *might be* and what they really *are*, are two different things. Our interpretation of the truth, and our unbelief have fixed a great gulf between the two. This is not only true of the "higher critics," but also of multitudes who profess to believe the whole Book and stand for it in theory. They see their privileges and contend that they may be enjoyed, but how very few are they who really practice them.

Moses found a place close by God, but the apostle Peter found another place, *afar off*, and alas, alas, most of the Lord's people in our day know the latter place best. But the cry of my heart and of

thousands of others is "Ah, show me that Happiest Place."

" 'Tis there I would always abide,
And never a moment depart,
Concealed in the cleft of Thy side,
Eternally hid in Thy heart."

In that wonderful second chapter of Ephesians, Paul tells us that we "*Are made nigh by the blood,*" and in the first chapter he says, "He *hath* made us accepted in the beloved." That is true of every believer judicially. The moment we accept Christ by faith, that moment our relationship is complete—can never be more so as far as God is concerned. "Are made nigh!" "Hath made us accepted!" But there are the two sides to this grand truth. Relationship is one thing, the enjoyment, power, and privileges of it are different things. And I am sure that there are many Christians who are right judicially, but not experimentally—sons of God, but living like servants; children of the Father, but not enjoying fellowship with Him.

In II. Samuel, 14: 28, we read, "Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and *saw not* the King's face." He was in the Kingdom relationship all right, a son, but out of touch with the King, out of fellow-

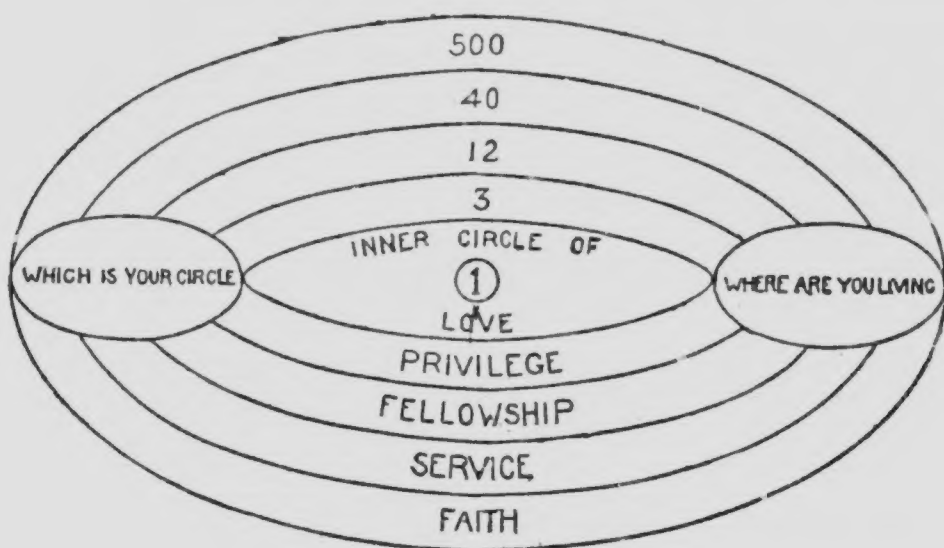
ship with his father. There was a cause for this unhappy condition and it may be you will find it if you search your own heart. When Jesus was on earth He spake a parable of "A certain man that had two sons." *Not* a parable of the "prodigal son," as it is so commonly called, but *two* sons, and as I read that parable and take in the surroundings I conclude that our Lord was teaching a lesson from the son who stayed home, rather than the prodigal as He spake to those Pharisees that day. At any rate there is a lesson in him for the church to learn to-day; for I am sure he represents a great many of God's children.

He had not run riot with the world; he had been loyal to the father, but he had not been enjoying his privileges as a son. His complaint was that he had never had a fatted calf, no music or dancing, no making merry with his friends. But this was all his own fault. It was not his Father's pleasure or will that he should be living this miserable kind of life any more than it is the will of our Father that we should be living at "This poor dying rate."

To me there is a strain of sadness in the father's voice when He says: "Son, thou art ever with me, and *all* I have is *thine*."

He could have had a grand time every day had

he but have lived up to his privileges, but alas he acted like a servant and not a son. And his wayward brother who had come home sick of sin and the world, was enjoying more of the father's fellowship and riches in a few minutes than his elder brother had enjoyed all his life.



I have seen this history repeated. Many drunkards and hardened sinners have turned from their evil ways, have come to Jesus with contrition, compassion and full purpose of heart, and in a few weeks have been enjoying more of the power and

presence of God than some Christians with years of experience. Some time ago I heard a fellow worker use an illustration that suggested the accompanying diagram. I trust it may incite some one to take the Best Place.

When we consider the lives of those who followed Jesus when He was here upon the earth, we cannot but see that there was a vast difference in their experience.

The Outer Circle

We find that He had a following of at least 500. The night before His crucifixion He said, "The world seeth me no more," and no unregenerate heart looked upon Him after He was taken from the cross. His appearings during the forty days were all to believers. And from what Paul tells us in I. Cor. 15: 6, we learn that there were at least "500 brethren" believers at that time. So we put 500 *in the outer circle*, representing those in Christ. Five hundred who believed on Him and were saved.

Circle of Service

But out of those 500 I find a company of 70 who were in the service for Jesus, and as a consequence

of that service must have had a closer communion than the other 430. They went about the towns and villages preaching and casting out demons and came often into His presence to tell Him how they had gotten on, etc. And have we not found that service for Christ brings a sense of His Presence and a power into our lives that we did not enjoy before.

I watched a big, good-hearted usher in my church one Lord's Day morning take a wee babe from a young mother who had been kept from worship a long time but at last ventured to bring her infant, because of her longing for God's house. But the little one became restless, and the mother fearing the child would disturb, arose to go out, when the usher came forward and told her he would care for the babe while she enjoyed the service, and away to the basement he went and walked to and fro, keeping the child quiet until the conclusion of the service. He did not hear one word of the preaching, but I was not surprised that evening when, as we walked home together, he remarked, "This has been a most blessed day to me. Why," he said, "this morning, while keeping Mrs. G.'s baby downstairs I was just running over with praise to God." To me the secret was obvious. A little self-denying service for Jesus had brought the joy.

I remember talking with a young woman one evening about the consecrated life. She told me that for ten years she had been a church member, but a very selfish one. Her life was barren. She had not thought of soul winning or any real service for Christ. A few days later she related an experience that was most humiliating yet most exalting. She said that that evening when I had spoken to her about the deeper Christian life she went home, and alone with God, settled it that He should have her whole life for sacrifice and service. The following morning she was tested to the very death of her pride and self-life. "I was coming up James street to business," she said, "when just before me on the walk I noticed a woman carrying two big black bundles and followed by two very untidy little children. She was a foreigner who had just come in on the morning express. She had been travelling all night and was tired and dirty. As I looked upon her I felt such a strong impression to speak to her and offer to assist her, but with it came the feeling of repulsion. How can I? Why the people on the street might think she was my mother and these dirty children are my sisters and I tried to get away from the thought that it would be like Jesus to help her; but, just as I was passing by her, she turned

to me and asked if I could direct her to one of our electric railroad stations. I was going right there myself, and how could I doubt that God wanted me to help and direct her. But oh, what a struggle I passed through in that next moment. But I found His grace sufficient. I said, 'Yes, I am going right there and will show you the way and if you will allow me I will carry one of those bundles for you,' and I took it for Jesus' sake, although I felt as if there was a fire raging at the roots of my hair. It seemed everyone was looking at me and laughing, and to make matters worse, one of the little children began to cry furiously, and then I was sure the people were all looking at us. But I just looked up and marched on for Jesus' sake, and finally I had to take the other bundle while the mother carried the tired baby. I hardly know how I reached the station, but I know that when I put those bundles on the seat in the waiting room I had to run away and weep, for oh how the blessing of God came upon my soul. I think it was my first experience of heavenly joy.'

Yes, that is it. Service for Jesus brings us into touch with heaven. And this kind of service, these little acts of kindness, these little lifts in His name,

are our opportunities every day for closer fellowship with Him.

Are you a believer sure of going to heaven? Are you in the next circle doing something for Jesus? If not, don't look for much joy in your life.

Fellowship Circle

But I find another company. The number is less—only 12 now. Mark tells us that He appointed 12 that they should be with Him. This is the circle of fellowship *with Him*. That is the true meaning of fellowship. These He desired not only to serve, but to be “with Him.” With Him at all times and in everything.

I heard an intimate friend of the late Hudson Taylor tell of his rising a great while before day and going away to a secluded spot where he sat in perfect silence for a long time, and when the friend asked him why he did this, the grand old man of God said:

“Oh, I am so busy with work and people during the day that I just feel I must have this little time of being still before the Lord.” Ah! this is the secret of the great work being accomplished through the C. I. M. Its founder was *with Jesus*.

Circle of Privilege

But I find still another company, and in it there are only three persons. It is the *Circle of Privilege*. There were three men when Jesus was here on earth that knew more of His mind and had deeper and fuller revelations of His Deity than any others. When He was going to raise the little maid He took three men with Him. Is He going to be transfigured? He takes the same three men. And on that awful night when all the billows went over Him, oh how the human in Him longed for some friend to stand with Him in the trial. He takes from the twelve three. Who were they? Peter, James and John. Why the same three? I cannot but feel as I read the whole story, that there was a reason why they should be privileged above their fellows, and that reason is, they had *Spiritual Ambition*.

They wanted to know things. They were keen, too, for a place close to Him and were more out and out than the others. In later years the Apostle Paul was privileged above others, "was caught up," and heard secrets from Jesus and the reason lies in the fact that "Christ was All" to Paul. Everything else was of little moment. Men are ambitious for money,

fame and the world. But how few are they who desire to be great with God—to follow Him at all cost; to drink the bitter cup and be baptized with suffering if only they may be close to Him?

The Inner Circle

But now we come to the *Inner Circle*. Here we find but one. There was one man who knew more about Christ and His plans and heard Him say things that no other living person knew. That man was John.

You remember that on that awful night when they were seated at the table for the "Last Supper" Jesus said, "One of you shall betray me." Oh what an hour! What consternation! What heart examination! Every one of them said, "Is it I?" No one accused another, but with fear began to search their own heart for the traitor. It seems that this is the fitting way for us to come to the Lord's table. It was at that time that Peter said, "John, you ask Him. He will tell you." Peter felt that John could find out things from His Lord that no other person could. He was closer to Him in person and in Spirit. And Jesus did tell Him who it was, and of all that company that night John alone knew who it was that should betray Him.

But to be in the Inner Circle means more than to pillow your head on His breast.

When Jesus was going to the Judgment Hall "they all forsook Him and fled," but "John went with Him." When Peter was standing out there by the enemies' fire denying Him John stood by Him, and methinks said some words of comfort as they crowned Him with thorns and spit in His face. Moreover, John went with Him to Calvary, and when *His own*, Israel, and the nations were mocking and passing Him by in derision John stood by, close up to the cross and heard the last word that ever He uttered to mortal man before His death.

Oh how Jesus loved him—big-hearted John. He gave him His mother, and gave John to be her son. What a reward for faithfulness. But that was not all. A good many weary years afterward dear old John was banished to the lonely isle of Patmos for loyalty to Christ and His word. And what a wonderful revelation of Jesus Christ was given to him there, and it was there nearly 2,000 years ago, that Jesus last spoke to man and *that* man was the man of *the Inner Circle*.

To him He spoke that last word, "Behold, I come quickly," and in response to that last message we

hear John's last cry of love, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Have we the ambition that leads us to desire the circle of privilege? Have we the love that will take us in to the Inner Circle?

"God has the best things for the few;
Who dare to stand the test,
He has a second place for those
Who will not have the best."

